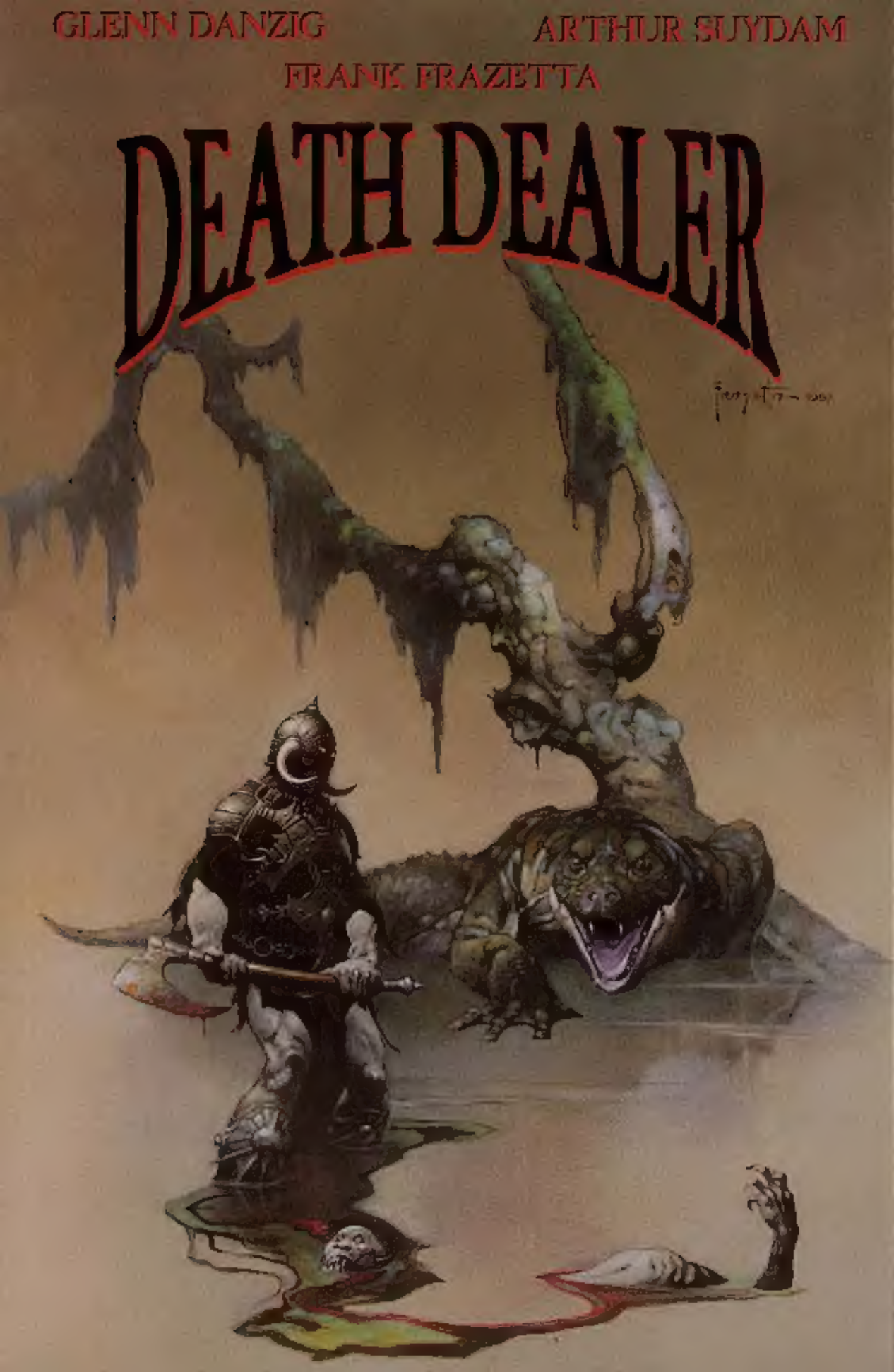
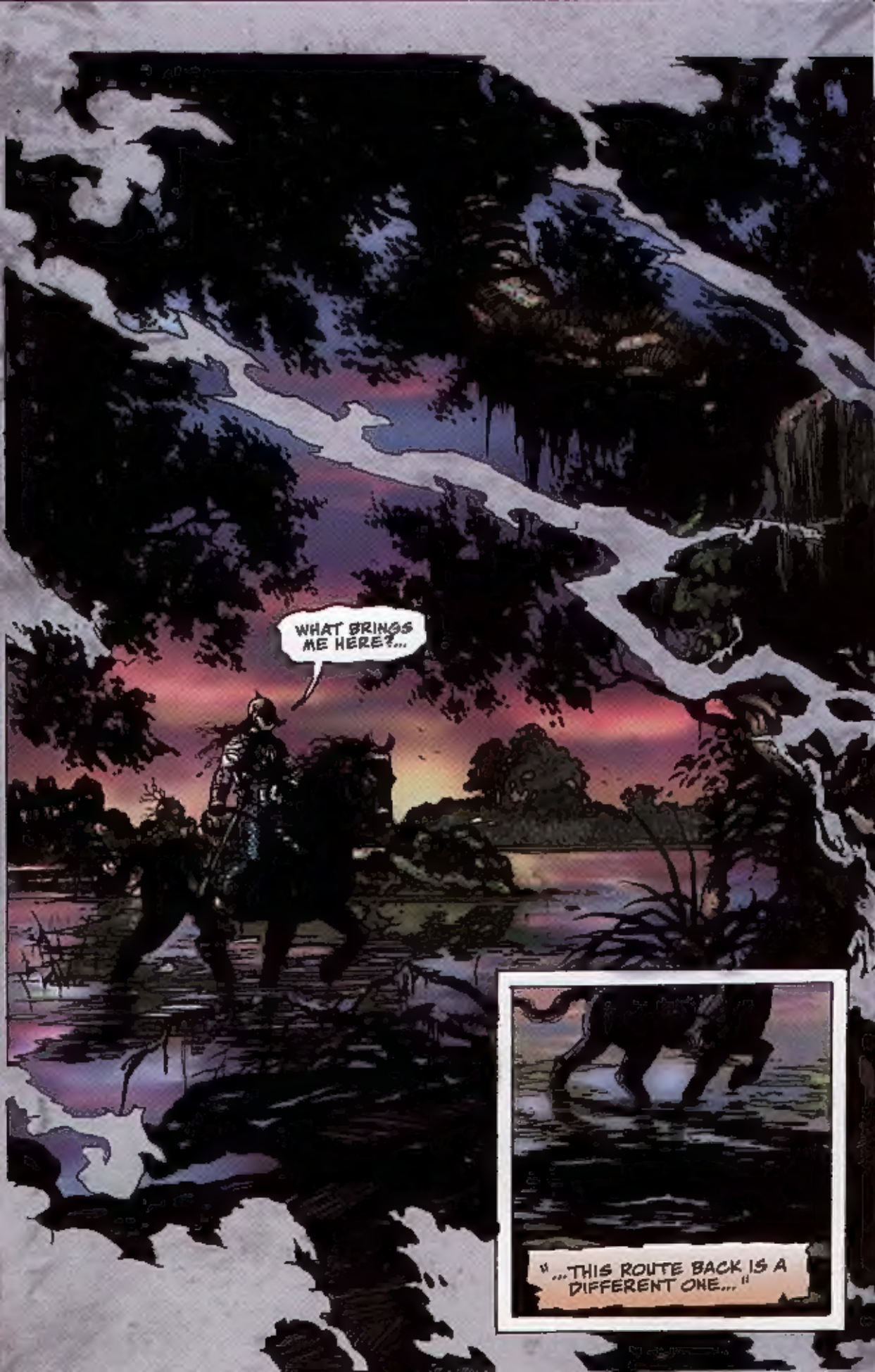
GLENN DANZIG

ARTHUR SUYDAM

FRANK FRAZETTA

DEATH DEALER




WHAT BRINGS ME HERE?...
"...THIS ROUTE BACK IS A DIFFERENT ONE..."

They stand for a bit, the air becoming thick and murkier...
I do not remember a swamp on the way there.

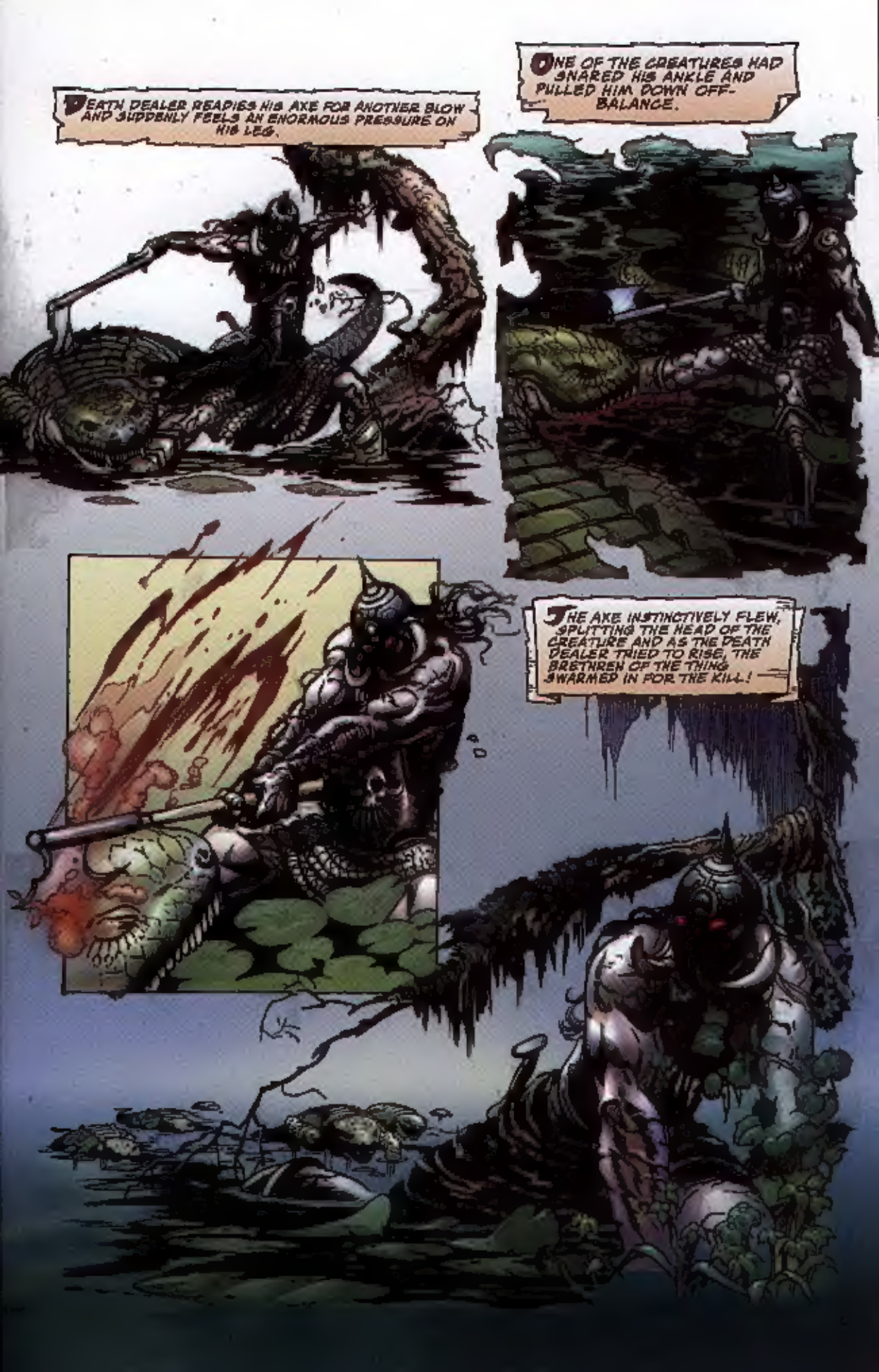
HE MOVES ON...
...FOLLOWED BY THE DARKNESS...
HIS HORSE SUDDENLY STARTLES...
...NOSTRILS FLARING... ITS EYES ABLAZE!
WHAT IS IT?

THE STEED BOLTS UPRIGHT— BEFORE IT, A HUGE, HISSING REPTILIAN MONSTROSITY!
HHSSSS

THE DARK DEMON-HORSE STOMPS DOWN ON THE HEAD OF THE CREATURE... BLOOD SHOOTING FROM ITS CRUSHED SKULL!
AND MORE OF THE LIZARD-THINGS START TO APPEAR, ADVANCING SLOWLY CLOSER.
COME, THEN...
... COME TO YOUR DEATH!!

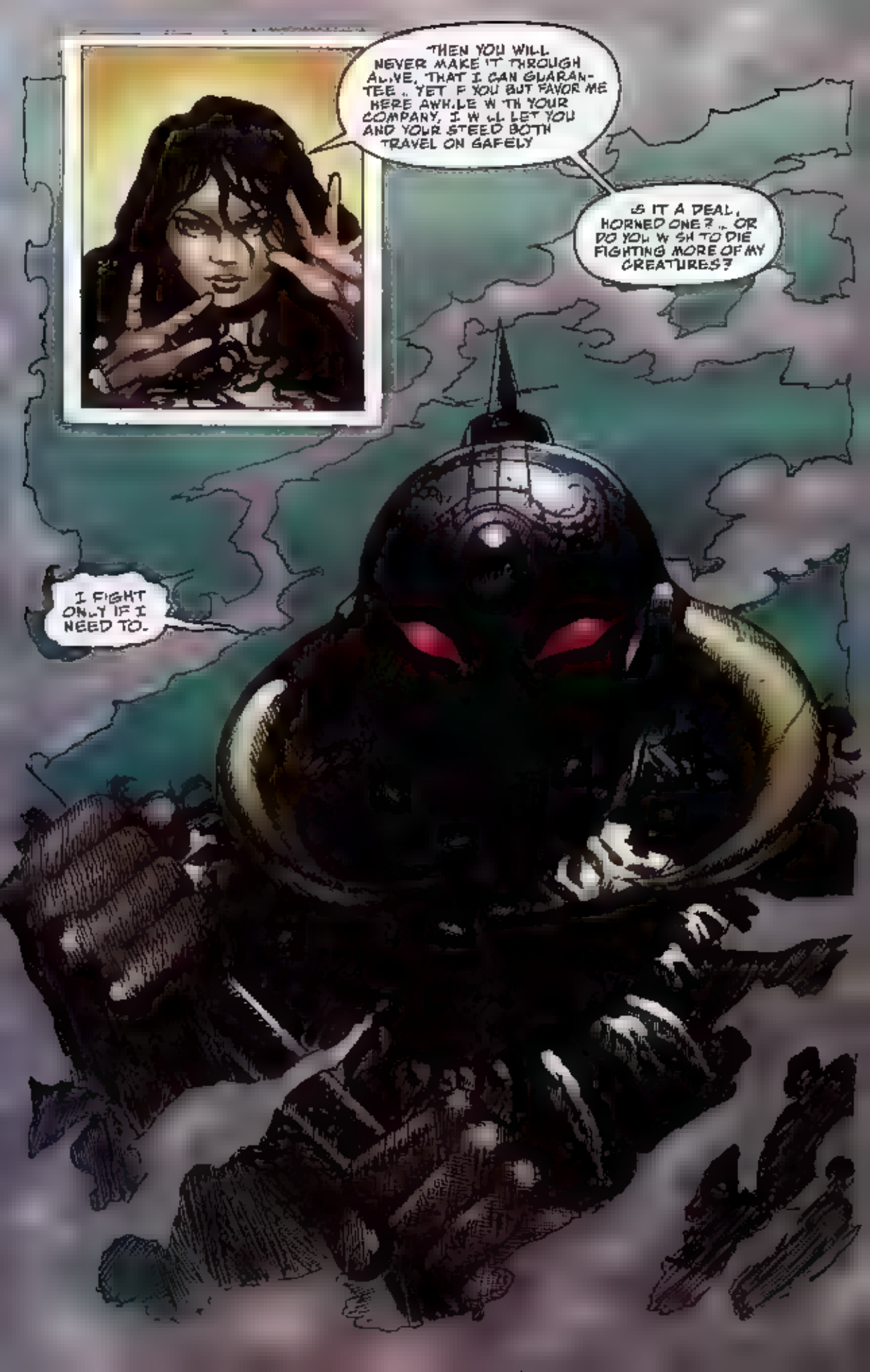
WHAK!
CHHK!
His axe dispatches a few, and more monstrous reptiles encircle him...
SSRAAA

THE HELMET VIBRATED AGAINST HIS SKULL, AND IN A SECOND THE SCENE WAS A BLUR OF SCALES AND TEETH. JAWS SNAPPING AND WATER SPLASHING, THE CROC-LIKE CREATURES WERE UPON HIM!!


DEATH DEALER READIES HIS AXE FOR ANOTHER BLOW AND SUDDENLY FEELS AN ENORMOUS PRESSURE ON HIS LEG.
ONE OF THE CREATURES HAD SNARED HIS ANKLE AND PULLED HIM DOWN OFF-BALANCE.
THE AXE INSTINCTIVELY FLEW, SPLITTING THE HEAD OF THE CREATURE AND AS THE DEATH DEALER TRIED TO RISE, THE BRETHREN OF THE THING SWARMED IN FOR THE KILL!

HOLD!
SHE APPEARED FROM NOWHERE, PALE AS THE MOON. HER FEATURES DARK AND ALLURING... RAVEN-BLACK TRESSES BLOWING WILDLY IN THE SWAMP'S MISTY BREEZE

THIS IS MY SWAMP... I AM AMPHIS! WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS HERE?
I HAVE NO BUSINESS HERE, EXCEPT TO PASS THROUGH.
NONE MAY TRAVEL HERE WITHOUT MY PERMISSION, AND THAT I HAVE NOT GIVEN!
I DID NOT ASK!


THEN YOU WILL NEVER MAKE IT THROUGH ALIVE, THAT I CAN GUARANTEE. YET IF YOU BUT FAVOR ME HERE AWHILE WITH YOUR COMPANY, I WILL LET YOU AND YOUR STEED BOTH TRAVEL ON SAFELY
IS IT A DEAL, HORNED ONE?.. OR DO YOU WISH TO DIE FIGHTING MORE OF MY CREATURES?
I FIGHT ONLY IF I NEED TO.

GOOD...
SHE TAKES HIS HAND, LEADING HIM ALONG.
THEN COME WITH ME TO MY COVE... AND SIT WITH ME AWHILE.

SHE THEN KNEELS BEFORE A GREAT STONE CHAIR, ADORNED WITH SKELETAL REMAINS AND MOSS... EACH ARMREST FLANKED WITH HUMAN SKULLS.
COME, HORNED ONE... REST HERE ON MY THRONE. BE NOT AFRAID.

... DO YOU EVER TAKE OFF THIS HELMET?
YOU FIGHT FIERCELY, WARRIOR.. BUT NOW YOU MAY RELAX ..
IT CANNOT COME OFF. IT AND I ARE ONE!
AND WHAT IS THAT SMELL.. UPON YOUR SKIN?
IT IS THE BLOOD OF MAN

THE BLOOD OF MAN...
...IT AROUSES ME
...IT MAKES ME FEEL SO...
AAAKK!
CHOK!
SORCERESS, YOU THINK ME A FOOL?!

I WAS GOING TO EAT YOU IN THE MORROW AFTER PLAYING WITH YOU THIS EVENING . BUT DINNER WILL BE FINE...
HHKSSSS!
THEN COME!

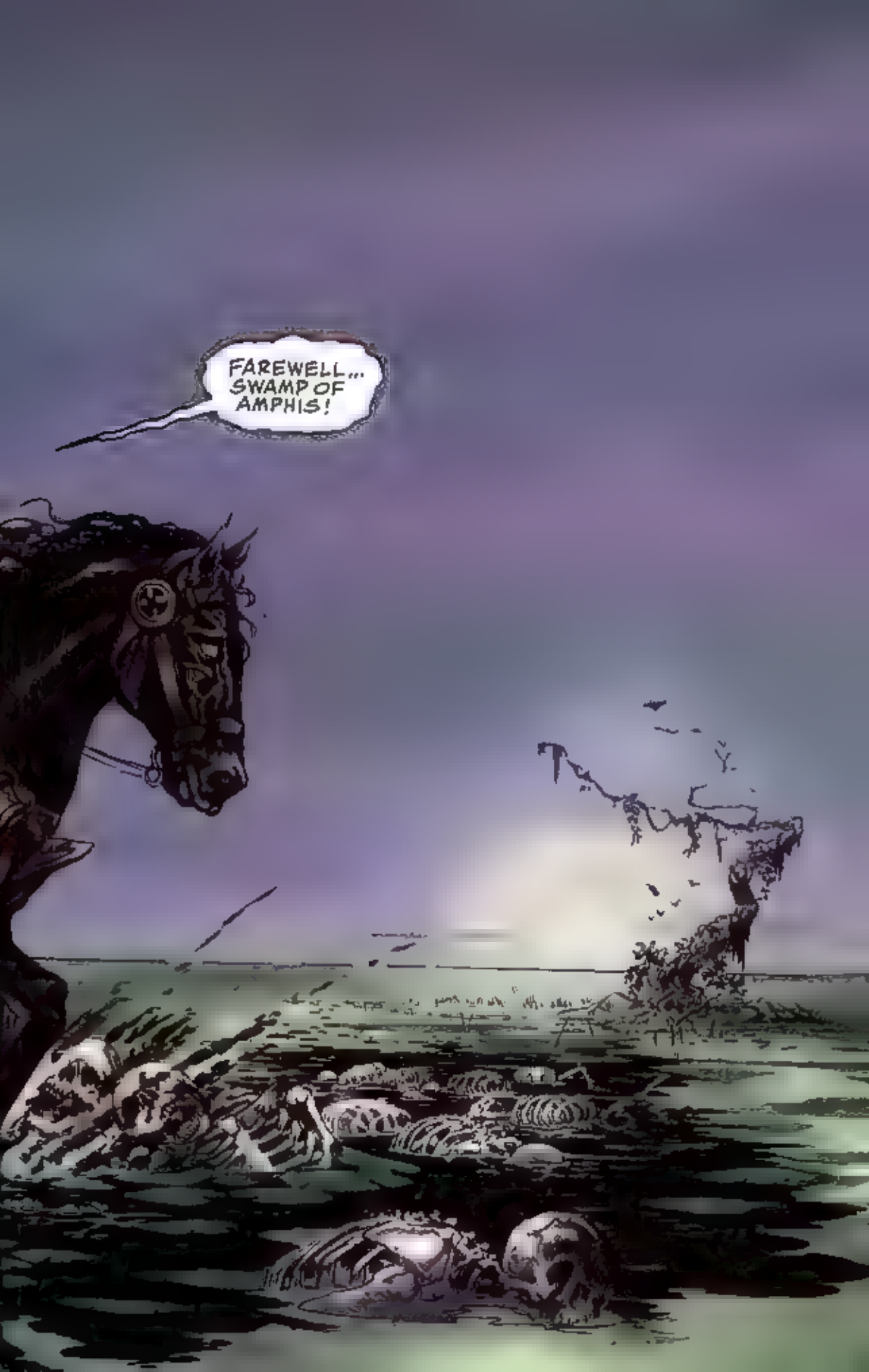
THE DEATH DEALER'S AXE SLICES THROUGH THE REPTILIAN ARM OF THE ONE-CREATURE.
HA! IT WILL GROW BACK SOON ENOUGH!
BUT NOW YOU DIE!
TO ME, MY PETS!!
AND THE LIZARD-CREATURES CIRCLE HIM.

DEATH DEALER LEAPS UPON THE SWAMP DEMON...
...AND AS IT CLAWS FURIOUSLY AT HIM, HE FEVERISHLY WORKS OPEN ITS JAWS, PULLING THEM WIDER AND WIDER APART, HIS MUSCLES AND TENDONS STRAINING, THE STRENGTH OF HER MASSIVE JAWS UNBEARABLE... AND THEN...
KRK
KRK
KRAAK!
NOW GRABBING UP HIS AXE, THE DEATH DEALER AWAITS THE APPROACHING LIZARD ARMY!

ASTONISHINGLY .. ONE BY ONE, THEY START TO TRANSFORM, STEADILY FROM REPTILIAN IN FORM, TO HUMAN...
TH... TH...THANK Y-YOUUU-!
...FINALLY CRUMBLING INTO LIFELESS BONE AND OOZE!

THEY WERE BUT MEN, BEWITCHED BY SORCERY.
WELL

... BETTER TO BE DEAD, THAN ENSLAVED AN ETERNITY


FAREWELL... SWAMP OF AMPHIS!

COMING TO A STOP, THEIR LONG JOURNEY HOME ALMOST AT AN END, HE AND THE HORSE SCAN OUT OVER THE VALLEY... AND THERE BLOCKING THEIR WAY TO THE KEEP, THEIR REFUGE... SCORES AND SCORES OF WARRIORS, A FULL ARMY AWAITING THEIR ARRIVAL...

WELCOME HOME, DEATH DEALER!! WE BRING YOU A PRESENT FROM KING DRAGOVIC...
...YOUR DEMISE!!

YOUR KING IS DEAD... MOVE AS DE.
WOULD YOU STILL FIGHT... FOR A RULER WHO IS NO MORE?

THE ARMY ROARS AND THEIR LEADER SPEAKS AGAIN...
[redacted]
WE COME TO WRENCH YOUR HEAD FROM ITS BODY ONCE AGAIN
KING OR NO KING!!
THEN SO BE IT... PREPARE TO DIE!

FOR DRAGOVIC!!

THE ATTACK IS INSTANTANEOUS... SOLDIERS AND MERCENARIES FLING THEMSELVES HEADLONG IN THE DIRECTION OF DEATH.. OBLIVIOUS TO THE FATE THEY KNOW AWAITS, WHEN AN AXE IS QUICKER THAN THE EYE...IT IS FELT BEFORE IT IS SEEN ..
AIIEEE!
SHUK

THE MASSIVE HORDES SWARM AROUND DEATH DEALER, CLOSING IN ON ALL SIDES... THEIR SHEER NUMBERS UNFATHOMABLE..
WE HAVE HIM NOW... ADVANCE!

UKK!
AAIIEEE!
BUT THE HORNED WARRIOR BATTLES ON AGAINST UNBEATABLE ODDS, CUTTING A PATH THROUGH THE BODIES THAT BLOCK HIS WAY TO THE KEEP... HIS OWN BODY HACKED, BLEEDING, AND WRACKED WITH PAIN

With blood pouring from his wounds, arrows jut out from him in all directions. He is backed against the wall by the entrance to the keep, the army's numbers too oppressive in his weakened state
You have fought bravely, death dealer, but you are just one... and we ...ARE ENDLESS. It will be an honor for me to take your foolish head this time... and now...

...TIME TO DIE!
SSSS
HSSS

GRRRR
HSSSS
SHRIIP

SNARLING AND HISSING, THE GUARDIANS OF THE KEEP VIOLENTLY SPRING OUT FROM THE SHADOWS. FELINE AND FERAL, THEY POUNCE UPON THE STUNNED SOLDIERS, RIPPING INTO THEM WITH A FEROCITY UNPARALLELED.
GRRAAA
HSSS

AS THE VICIOUS CAT-GIRLS SAVAGE ANYTHING NEAR THEM. THE BRIEF MOMENTS OF REST HAVE GIVEN THE DEATH DEALER HIS SECOND WIND. HIS AXE SWINGS BACK AND FORTH, A BLOOD-STAINED PENDULUM, SENDING SEVERED HEADS FLYING LIFELESSLY ABOUT
GRRAUR
HSSS
UK--UGH!
IMPOSSIBLE!
THEY ARE DEMONS POSSESSED!

THE CAT GIRLS CONTINUE THEIR BLOODY RAMPAGE. WITH RUTHLESS, UNBRIDLED ABANDON, THEY RIP AND SHRED THE FLESH OF THE WARRIORS... THEIR FACES GRINNING HAPPILY IN SARDONIC DELIGHT.
HISSS
GRRRR
AAIIIE!
AND AS THE TIDE SLOWLY TURNS, THOSE WITH ENOUGH BRAINS AND LIFE LEFT, RETREAT...

THE DEATH DEALER UNSTEADILY APPROACHES THE ENTRANCE, BRACING HIMSELF MOMENTARILY... STILL WEAK FROM THE GREAT BATTLE...
HHRR
HHRR
...HE MAKES HIS WAY DOWN THE WINDING HALLS OF THE KEEP. AS ABOVE HIM THE CAT GIRLS RACE BY GIGGLING, A SORT OF PURR RISING FROM THEIR THROATS.

THE LONG, DISTORTED SHADOW OF A HELMET AND AXE STRETCHED AHEAD... A BLACK SPECTRE LEADING THE WAY... WHILE UP HIGH THE FELINE DEVILS SCURRIED AND PRANCED PERILOUSLY ALONG THE CEILING'S LEDGE...
HISS SSSS
GRAA
HSSSS
THE HORNED METAL SHEATH THAT COVERED HIS FACE FORCED HIS GAZE UPWARD...

FINALLY, HE LAY BACK ON HIS THRONE, THE INCESSANT HUMMING OF THE HELMET SLOWLY DISSIPATING. HIS MUSCLES RELAXED, THE CAT-WOMEN SLOWLY ENCIRCLING HIM TO STAND AND CROUCH AT THEIR LORD'S SIDE ... THEIR STRANGE RELATIONSHIP NOW SEEMED CLOSER, STRENGTHENED BY THE TAXING BATTLE...
...AND AS THEIR PURRING FILLED THE GREAT CHAMBER, HE THOUGHT HE COULD SENSE THEIR CONTENT... BUT NEVER ONCE DID HE CLOSE HIS EYES, OR LET THEM OUT OF HIS SIGHT!